

WELCOME ADDRESS BY SENATOR DR. EZE AJOKU, PRESIDENT OF THE COALITION OF SOCIETIES FOR THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN NIGERIA (COSROPIN) AT THE NATIONAL ELDERS' PARLIAMENT (NEP) PROJECT AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATIVE MEETING 19TH OF AUGUST 2021 AT GRAF HALL.

Protocol:

National Elders' Parliament

On behalf of the Coalition of Societies for the Rights of Older Persons in Nigeria (COSROPIN) in collaboration with the International Federation on Ageing – Nigeria (IFAN), I want to welcome each and every one of you to this National Elders' Parliament (NEP) Project and Programme Development and Partnership Consultative Meeting holding today.

Permit me to use this opportunity to introduce COSROPIN to you.

The Coalition of Societies for the Rights of Older Persons in Nigeria (COSROPIN) is made up of Associations; Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), Community Based Organisation (CBOs), Retirement groups of the Army, Airforce, Navy, Police, Senior Civil Servants and Pension Unions, with all groups working with or affiliated with Ageing Issues in Nigeria with the mission to provide a platform for the entrenchment and sustenance of the well-being, welfare and dignity of Older Persons and the vision to awaken the Consciousness of Nigeria towards promoting and ensuring the well-being, welfare and dignity of Older Persons among other things:

- i. Advance support, protect the welfare and well-being of Older Persons in Nigeria.
- ii. To affirm and protect the rights of Older Persons in Nigeria as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Law, as well as other Regional and International Human Rights Instruments to which Nigeria is a party.
- iii. Strive for the provision of quality health care to Older Persons in Nigeria.
- iv. Oppose every discriminatory and disadvantageous policy or legislation adversely affecting the rights, security and dignity of Older Persons in Nigeria.
- v. Apolitically present a strong and united lobby in the Federal and State Executive, Legislative as well as other statutory bodies on matters affecting Older Persons in Nigeria.
- vi. Promote the recognition of wide-ranging expertise and services provided by Older Persons in Nigeria, etc.

It is the fulfilment of our objective to promote the wide-ranging expertise, talents, experience, wisdom and networking of Senior Citizen that has called for this consultative meeting on the National Elders' Parliament.

As some of you must have heard, the advocacy of COSROPIN with other stakeholders within the last 6 years has given rise to the development and Executive sign off of the National Policy on Ageing and the inauguration of the National Senior Citizen Center Board. It was COSROPIN that brought the National Senior Citizen Center Act to the attention of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development on its formation. We

are also happy to report that the Older Persons (Rights and Privilege) Bill 2019 which was developed in this same hall has been passed by the Senate, awaiting concurrence with the House of Representative. Currently, COSROPIN is involved in advocacy for National Non-Contributory Health Insurance for all Older Persons over 70 years and maintenance of the current Health Insurance for retiring civil servant at age 60 for the 10 years to join the National insurance. As the voice of Older Persons, COSROPIN is at the fore front of issues affecting Older Persons.

We want to appreciate every one attending today's consultative meeting of the National Elders' Parliament (NEP) Project and Programme Development and Partnership. We have Children and Youth Parliament, why not Elders' Parliament?.

Our concept is that the National Elders' Parliament will be a consultative socio-cultural alternative conflict resolution platform, non-religious, non-political that will use the wisdom, counsel and experience of the elderly to contribute to the peace promotion, development and conflict resolution mechanism of the country. The National Elders' Parliament is a project designed to maximally utilize the wisdom, experience and network of elder statesmen with integrity and pedigree drawn from various geo-political zones of Nigeria as an alternative conflict resolution and peace building mechanism for the Nation.

It may also interest you to know that we are planning Senior Citizens' Games which we have kicked off with a novelty match between COSROPIN and Garki All Stars Football Club. We are waiting to obtain the support of the Ministry of Sports to go national.

Currently the Senior Citizens are neglected even though they are a major national development resource and strength for National Development.

COSROPIN is out to restore the dignity and right positioning of senior citizens in the country. In many communities Senior citizens are already playing this role of conflict resolution and community watches and gate keepers. They are currently the custodians of our culture and conscience of our communities. The formalization of these roles through the Elders' parliament in local governments, states and the Federation will surely help to build the infrastructure for peace and progress in the nation.

Thank you for your presence as we look forward to your contributions at this consultative forum.

Distinguished Participants, gentlemen of the Press, thank you for attending.

Senator Dr. Eze Ajoku

President, COSROPIN